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THE RELATION OF THE PUBLIC LANDS TO THE
LABOR PROBLEM DURING THE PERIOD
FROM 1830 TO 1860

By

WILLIAM ALBERT McCONAGHA

B. S. Muskingum College 1917

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ECONOMICS
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS, 1922

URBANA, ILLINOIS

M13

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

June 3 1922

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY

SUPERVISION BY *William Albert McCoughlin*

ENTITLED *The Relation of the Public Lands to the
Labor Problem during the Period 1830 to 1860*

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF *Master of Arts in Economics*

E. L. Bogart
In Charge of Thesis

E. L. Bogart
Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in*

Committee


on

Final Examination*

*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's

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THE RELATION OF THE PUBLIC LANDS TO THE LABOR PROBLEM
DURING THE PERIOD FROM 1830 to 1860

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Albert Gallatin, speaking before the Fourth Congress on the relation of land to labor in the United States, observed that if the cause of the happiness of this country were enquired into, it would be found to rise as much from the great plenty of land in proportion to the inhabitants which the citizens enjoyed as from the wisdom of their political institutions. "It is in fact because the poor man has always been able to attain his portion of land." More than three quarters of a century later (1), Henry George writing on the same subject says: "Wherever you find land relatively low, will you not find wages relatively high? And where you find land high, will you not find wages low? As land increases in value poverty deepens and pauperism appears. In new settlements where land is cheap you will find no beggars and the inequality of condition is very slight." (2)

Thus far the effect of western lands on politics and the character of the people has received the principal attention of historians. This, however, does not seem to be due to a lack of appreciation on the part of either contemporary or later writers of its economic importance. From Chevalier, writing on American society, manners and politics in 1836, comes the observation that "In America, as in Europe, competition among the head workmen tends to decrease their wages, but the tendency is not increased in America as in Europe by competition among the laborers; that is, by an excess of hands wanting employ, for the West stands open as a refuge for all unemployed." In Europe a coalition of workers can only signify one of two things: "Raise our wages or we shall die of hunger," or "Raise our wages or we shall take up arms." In America, on the

other hand, such a coalition means, "Raise our wages or we go to the West." (3)

Secretary Walker in his treasury report for 1845 declared that "The reduction of the price of public lands in favor of the settlers and cultivators would enhance the wages of labor. If those who lived by the wages of labor could purchase 320 acres for \$80, 160 for \$40, 80 for \$20, or 40 for \$10, the power of manufacturing capitalists to reduce the wages of labor would be greatly diminished, because when the lands are thus reduced in price those who live by the wages of labor could purchase farms at those low rates and cultivate the soil for themselves and families, instead of working for others at twelve hours per day in the manufactories." (4) John R. Commons in his History of Labor in the United States writes that "The condition that seems to distinguish most clearly the history of labor in America from its history in other countries is the wide expanse of free land. As long as the poor and industrious can escape from the conditions which render them subject to other classes, so long do they refrain from that aggression on the property rights and political power of others, which is the symptom of a labor movement." (5)

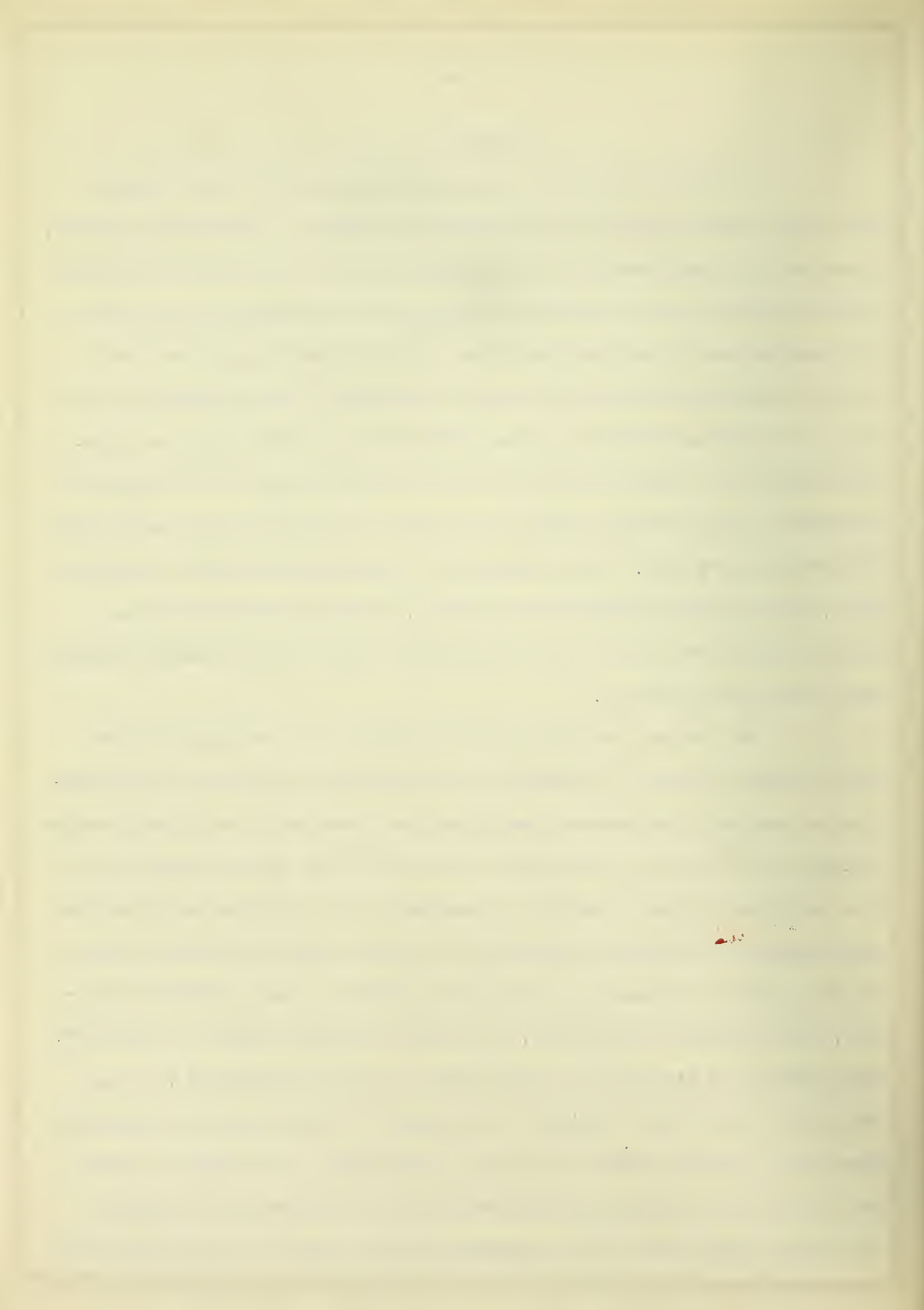
Hart sums up perhaps the general attitude of writers on the subject and casual thinkers also when he says, "The wilderness ever opened a gate to the poor, the disconsolate and the oppressed." (6)

That the extent to which land is accessible in any country does have a vital bearing on its social and economic problems seems to be a logical assumption, and it is the purpose of this study to inquire into the significance of the fact that during the period from 1830 to 1860 we were in constant contact with a great unbroken frontier which moved steadily westward with the flow of population. What seems to be the popular conception of this relationship has been suggested. Observe now the extent to which the history of the period vindicates or vitiates that idea.

Chapter I

In 1830 the total area of the United States was 1,793,400 square miles, which was occupied by 12,617,000 people, including free blacks and slaves. Three-fourths (approximately) of this population still lived along the seaboard, leaving little more than one-fourth to occupy the vast trans-Appalachian country extending west to the Rocky Mountains. Only 628,000 square miles were included in the then settled area bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and a tortuous frontier line some 5,300 miles in length, which ran across the central part of Maine, along the international boundary from New Hampshire to Detroit, across northern Indiana and Illinois, and down the west bank of the Mississippi to the Gulf, thus leaving still, large unsettled tracts in northern Maine, New York and northwestern Pennsylvania. Much of the middle west had scarcely passed the frontier stage, and the great mass of the Louisiana Territory was comparatively untouched.

For the purpose of this study it might now be profitable to turn from this brief survey of the extent of the unoccupied land areas to a consideration of the social and economic conditions that prevailed in the already settled portions of the country adjoining them. One of the best general descriptions of this condition is given by McMaster. Speaking of the conditions that prevailed among the poor and laboring class during the period from 1825 to 1830, he says, (7) "The influx of paupers to partake of the benefits of many charitable societies, the overcrowded labor market, the steady increasing numbers of unemployed, the congestion of population in limited areas and all its attendant vice and crime and the destitution produced by low wages and lack of constant employment, have already become a matter for serious consideration. An unskilled laborer was fortunate if he received 75¢ for twelve hours' work and found employment for three hundred days a year. Hundreds were glad to work for 37¢ and even 25¢



a day in winter, who in spring and summer could earn $62\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$ or perhaps $87\frac{1}{2}$ by toiling fourteen hours on the turnpikes and canals. Fifteen dollars a month in summer and board was considered good pay. In winter it was not uncommon for men to work for their board. If the earnings of men were low, those of women were lower yet. Many trades and professions now open to them had no existence or were confined to men. They might bind shoes, sew rags, fold and stitch books, become spoolers or make coarse shirts and duck pantaloons at 8 or 10¢ apiece.

"To the desperate poverty produced by such wages many evils were attributed. Intemperance was encouraged, children were sent into the streets to beg and pilfer, and young girls were driven to lives of shame to an extent that seems almost incredible in more modern times."

The editor of the New York Commercial advertiser in an appeal in behalf of the impoverished population of the city in January, 1829, said, (8) "It makes my heart bleed to look at the hundreds and thousands of shivering, hungry applicants for charity who have thronged the old almshouse in the park this afternoon." A correspondent to the New York Times speaks of thousands of industrious mechanics who, unable to provide food and clothing for their families, were applying for assistance. The significant fact, however, is that pointed out by Mr. Commons, namely, that not only was there at times a great deal of unemployment but that the unskilled at least suffered constantly from low wages and long hours.

In 1829 the Boston Prison Discipline Society reported that about 75,000 people in the United States were annually imprisoned for debt. In 1830 the same society estimated on the basis of returns from nearly one hundred prisons in different parts of the United States that the number annually imprisoned for debt in Massachusetts was 3,000; in New York, 10,000; in Pennsylvania, 7,000; in Maryland, 3,000, and in the other northern and eastern states

nearly as above in proportion to the population. They reported furthermore that the number imprisoned for debts of less than one dollar was very great, the number imprisoned for debts between five and twenty dollars was greatest, while the number imprisoned for more than twenty and less than one hundred dollars is not one-third as great as the number imprisoned for less than twenty dollars.

"A report by the citizens of Rochester, New York, shortly before this time showed that in Monroe County during a single year about one person in every ten families had been imprisoned for debt. One of these cases was for 25 cents." The number of persons imprisoned for debt as compared to the number imprisoned for other crimes was everywhere very high, in some instances at a ratio of eight to one.

The jails in which debtors were confined were often overcrowded and terribly unsanitary. Fuel and bedding and food too, with the exception of a daily ration of soup, were sometimes lacking. In some instances debtors received much worse treatment than common criminals.

A consideration of these conditions, together with the insignificance of the debts that compelled people to submit to them, seems again to indicate the existence of a wide-spread condition of wretchedness and poverty among the lower and laboring classes at this time.

Not only does it appear that wages were low and employment uncertain during this period, but under employment hours were exceedingly long and irksome. Significant in this connection is the following extract from the Pennsylvanian. (9) "The excessive labor which the mechanic is forced to undergo saps his constitution and either cuts him off at a period of existence which should be the prime of life, or leaves him linger out a few years more, a miserable wreck of humanity. Humanity requires us not to abuse the brute creation by over labor, and surely our fellow man is entitled to as much consideration. (Exhaustion of

the frame requires for its removal excitement fully proportional to the depression, and it is too often sought in alcohol. It has been ascertained and truly that excessive labor has been the cause of more intemperance than all other causes combined.) Although this may seem to smack somewhat of journalistic propaganda, it certainly has a basis of fact.

" The system of labor from sun to sun had been taken over from agriculture where conditions were entirely different, and even out-door mechanics worked from sunrise to sunset all seasons. In winter this meant comparatively short hours, but as wages were paid by the day regardless of the season, every inducement existed to concentrate all possible work in the late spring and summer and early fall when the days were long and men could be required to work twelve to fifteen hours. As a result not only was there great physical strain during the summer months, but during the short winter days hundreds of building trades mechanics were unemployed." (10)

In discussing the hours of labor in the cotton mills at Lowell, the cotton manufacturing center of the United States, during the decade of the thirties, James Montgomery says: (11) "From the first of September to the first of May, work is commenced in the morning as soon as the hands can see to advantage, and stopped regularly during those eight months at seven-thirty in the evening. During the four summer months, or from the first of May to the first of September, work is commenced at five o'clock in the morning and stopped at seven in the evening. Forty-five minutes is allowed for dinner during the summer months and thirty during the other eight. About $73\frac{1}{2}$ hours per week may be regarded as the average hours of labor in the cotton mills at Lowell and generally throughout the whole eastern district of the United States. In many, perhaps the majority, of the cotton factories in the middle and southern districts, the hours of labor in summer are from sunrise to sunset or from half

past four in the morning till half past seven in the evening, being about thirteen and three-fourths hours per day, equal to eighty-two and one-half hours per week."

In contrast to these conditions it might be noted that at this time "in Great Britain the hours of labor per week were limited by Act of Parliament to 69 or $11\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day, but the general regulation in all factories is nine hours on Saturday and twelve hours on each of the other five days."

One American workman, lately arrived from England and quoted in the Mechanics Free Press for August, 1830, avers that in America after paying for board and washing he had \$4.63 per week left, while in England he would have the same amount left, whose buying capacity would be one-third more, which would be earned with fifteen hours per week less labor.

Thus far our attention has been directed to a consideration of the conditions that prevailed among the working classes near 1830 or about the time of the beginning of the period of this study. That these conditions should have remained during all the subsequent years of this period equally unfavorable would be, as we shall try to show, illogical to expect, and we believe as a matter of historical fact, quite easy to deny; and yet a few random observations tend to impress one with the fact that the condition of labor in the United States throughout the entire period remained somewhat inconsistent with the idea that an abundance of cheap public land precludes the idea of a labor problem in so far as that problem is a question of freeing the laboring classes from oppressive working conditions or capitalistic exploitation.

For example, (12) in 1845 we find the women of New York City working for from ten to eighteen cents per day, some of the most proficient receiving twenty-five, an amount on which it was impossible to live decently and honestly. "The wages of unskilled laborers in New York, generally Irishmen just

from the old world, was sixty-five cents a day. Unable to live and procure lodging on three dollars and ninety cents a week, a number of them employed in Brooklyn were allowed to build shanties on land near where they were employed. The Massachusetts legislature when it met in 1844 received a petition from twenty-one hundred and thirty-nine operators who complained of long hours and unhealthy rooms. The hours complained of were from five in the morning until seven in the evening with an hour and a quarter off for meals.

In 1850 we hear a representative of the German immigration saying, "We came here because we were oppressed, and what have we gained? Nothing but misery, hunger and oppression." (13)

The New York Herald for February 7, 1852, declared that laborers on public works were often discharged and could not collect wages, sometimes months over due, that they were forced to work from sunrise to sunset for from fifty to seventy-five cents, and that they were compelled to take part of this in trade at small liquor and victualing stores erected along the line of public works. (14)

The last item of evidence dealing with laboring conditions during this period is from the writings of Trollope. Speaking of conditions in the middle west just before the Civil War, he said, (15) "The laboring Irish in these towns eat meat seven days a week, but I have met many a laboring Irishman among them who has wished himself back in his old cabin. There is, I think, no task master over free labor so exacting as an American. He knows nothing of hours and seems to have that idea of a man which a lady always has of a horse. He thinks he will go forever. I wish those masons in London who strike for nine hours' work with ten hours' pay could be driven to the labor market of western America for a spell. American workmen are driven forward at this work in a manner that to an English workman would be intolerable."

One might continue almost indefinitely in this fashion. If, however, the testimony offered is worthy of consideration, this should be sufficient to help to some conclusion. If worthless, continuation would be equally useless.

It must be admitted that much of the evidence presented in this chapter has centered around the very beginning of the period, and yet there is nothing to indicate that those were abnormal times, certainly not abnormally depressed, for the country was just entering on that period of abnormal activity that precipitated the crisis of 1837.

It is admitted also that part of this material has been somewhat controversial and tinged with prejudice doubtless and should be taken accordingly "cum grano salis," and yet enough remains, we believe, to amply justify the conclusion that during the first part especially of the thirty years' period from 1830 to 1860, distress existed among the laborers of America to an extent that is quite amazing, especially to the uninformed, and seems somewhat at variance with the original assumption that an abundance of land offered an alternative always to the conditions existing within the industrial sections of a country and thus precluded the possibility of widespread poverty or exploitation.

That ordinarily or ultimately the welfare of the laboring class is conditioned largely by the possibility of their escape to the soil, seems too evident to need discussion or demonstration. That the abundance of public land that existed during this period failed to give effective relief during the whole of the period, seems from the foregoing data equally obvious. The next endeavor then will be to discover why this was true.

Chapter II

Many conditions might be mentioned that acted as a check to the natural tendency to migrate from the older industrial sections of the East to the unoccupied territory of the West during the earlier part of the nineteenth century, thus tending to vitiate also the idea that these lands formed an easy method of escape from any conditions that became unsatisfactory in the original settlements.

First, it might be worth while to consider to what conditions one escaped who left the mills of New England or the Middle States to take up life in the frontier districts during the early part of the century. Roosevelt in his "Winning of the West" states it concisely when he says, (16) "To push the frontier westward in the teeth of the forces of the wilderness was fighting work such as suited well enough many a stout soldier who had worn the blue and buff of the continental line, or who with his fellow rough-riders had followed in the train of some grim partisan leader."

Stirring as this picture may be to a man, what appeal, one might ask, could such conditions have to women and girls, even tho they were being worn out in the cotton mills at Lowell. The frontier home with its "hole in the roof to let out the smoke and its hole in the door to let in the pigs" could scarcely have been said to be very appealing to them. "A fine place for men and dogs," testified the wife of one pioneer, "but a poor place for women," many of whom doubtless "accompanied their husbands from a sense of duty or necessity while secretly pining for the quiet, orderly, friendly society to which they originally bade reluctant farewell." (17)

Harriet Martineau, writing her impression of frontier life (1834 -6) says, (18) "None of the graces of fixed habitation had grown up. The success of his (the settler's) after life can hardly atone to him for such a destitution

of comfort as I saw him in the midst of."

Not only did the pioneers suffer the discomforts of privation, but often from sickness brought on by their manner of life and the unhealthy condition of much of the new country. "Too often," observes Trollope (19) "the pioneer bore on his lantern jaws the signs of ague and sickness." Indeed, it is well known that "throughout large portions of the western country fevers and agues and stomach troubles beset the settlers. As to remedies, the pioneers had vigorous constitutions, otherwise they could hardly have survived the combination of disease and cure. (20)

Another repressive influence which prevented a ready movement of population from centers of redundancy or conditions otherwise unfavorable was that utter lack during most of the first quarter of the century of transportation facilities, which not only made the unsettled west difficult of access but made of those who entered it virtual exiles from the older portion of the country and left them without adequate market for their products.

The remoteness of the Mississippi Valley from the Atlantic seaboard before the influence of the campaign for internal improvements, that was so active for a decade following the completion of the Erie Canal, had made itself felt, presents a serious obstacle to the poor, especially from New England. (21)

To relieve, partially at least, this situation a "rage" for turn-pikes struck the country following the westward expansion after the Revolutionary War. New York alone in 1811 chartered one hundred and thirty-seven companies to build 4,500 miles of road. This general movement by no means solved the difficulty. Roads on the whole were unspeakably poor.- sloughs of mire during the thawing days of winter and spring and thick with dust in the summer. As late as 1835 Miss Martineau defies "pen, pencil or malice to do justice to the wretchedness of their condition. Transportation costs, as a consequence, re-

mained enormous. To haul a ton from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh on an all land route cost \$125. To move a bushel of salt three hundred miles over any road cost \$2.50. For wagoning one hundredweight of sugar three hundred miles the tariff was \$5.00. Taking the country through, it may be said that to transport goods cost \$10 per ton per hundred miles. The cost of long carriage so far as many products were concerned was simply prohibitory. (22)

Those who lived near the sea-coast found it much easier and more economical to ship by New Orleans such articles as were not needed on the road, especially if they intended to settle on any of the navigable waters of the Mississippi system, than to carry such freight overland with them. (23) In traveling at this time passengers were reckoned as so much freight, so that travel was not only difficult but very expensive. This barrier was particularly effective in the case of the would-be emigrant from New England. (24)

As the civilization of the East with its products was effectively cut off from the West, with equal completeness was the West cut off from the potential market of the seaboard states. "Peltries, ginseng, and whiskey were almost the only products that could pay their cost of transportation overland to Philadelphia, and the proceeds derived from the sale of these were sufficient only to purchase things of first necessity, as salt and gunpowder and indispensable articles of iron. (25) The early western farmers were thus perforce self-sustaining. "The women made the clothes from the wool, the flax, or the skin, the men of the family helping in the heavier work, as of boat making." (26) Prices of produce were very low. At Edwardsville in Illinois, corn sold for from twelve and a half to twenty cents a bushel. Farther inland, the conditions were much worse. In 1824, corn might be bought in any quantity in Cincinnati for eight cents a bushel. Wheat yielded twenty-five cents, while flour sold for a dollar and a quarter a barrel. (27) A cow and a calf might be

obtained in exchange for a bushel of salt. Clearly, the settlement of the West was largely conditioned by the possibility of finding ways and means of transportation. (28)

Coincident almost with the realization of this need comes an era of improvement in this line, such as has never been equalled. In 1811 Fulton's new invention was introduced on Western waters, and in 1817 the first steamboat voyage was made from New Orleans to Louisville. The ability of this new instrument of commerce to breast the current of the Mississippi being once established, traffic grew with wonderful rapidity. In 1834 the number of steamboats on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and their tributaries was ascertained to be 230, with an aggregate carrying capacity of 39,000 tons. In 1842 the number of boats had increased to about 450, with a carrying capacity of something more than 100,000 tons.

In the meantime steam navigation of the Great Lakes had begun. In 1818 the first steamboat was built on Lake Erie. By 1833 eleven small steamers were plying on the upper lakes. This number had grown to sixty in 1845, supplemented by 320 sailing vessels of from 1,000 to 1,200 tons each.

(29) Following in chronological order, the next important step in the train of events that was to open up the West was the completion in 1818 of the Cumberland Road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Wheeling, West Virginia. Well graded and constructed of stone and gravel, Gallatin's prophecy that over it "ten thousand tons would be carried westward annually and 100,000 barrels of flour brought back" (30) seems quite justified. Immediately after its opening it did become one of the chief avenues of the West, and Wheeling was made for a time the entrepot of the Ohio Valley. Its importance, however, as an artery of trade was soon eclipsed by the most epoch making event of the series - the opening of the Erie Canal.

"Thanks to the ability and persistent endeavor of DeWitt Clinton, the problem of transportation between the East and the West was at last solved."

(31) No other single work in the United States has ever exerted a greater influence on the prosperity of internal trade. Freight rates between Buffalo and Albany were reduced 90 percent, almost immediately. An idea of the volume of trade may be gathered from the fact that tolls of half a million dollars were collected immediately upon its completion, and before a decade has passed it had paid the cost of its construction. (32)

The indirect effects of the Canal were no less remarkable. Pennsylvania, awakened by the danger of the total loss of western trade, began in 1826 an extensive system of canals to connect Philadelphia with the Ohio River and Great Lakes. Not to be outdone, Maryland and Virginia agreed in 1828 upon the construction of a canal from tide-water on the Potomac to the Ohio, while at the same time, dubious of the success of a canal over such a route, some Baltimore financiers, "putting their confidence in a new and almost untried transportation device", inaugurated the plan of building a railroad across the mountains to win for Baltimore a share of the commerce of the West. (33)

By 1830 it was evident that easy communication between the East and the West was assured. There were 1,348 miles of canal completed; 1,828 miles were under construction; 44 miles of railroad had been completed; 697 had been projected, and 422 were in the process of building. So great was the transformation wrought by these improvements that Dunbar speaks of those who lived during the early decades of this century as "the last pioneer generation." (34)

Chapter III

It must not be assumed that with the passing of the problem of transportation and communication, all barriers to free emigration to the West had been overcome, for such was not the case. By the action of the various states the land to be occupied had become a public domain under the control of the National Government, and without its approval, not one foot of this land might be occupied.

The history of the attitude of our Government toward the disposition of its public lands is a varied one. "The primary use of foeland, according to Bedes' celebrated spistle to Egbert, was to reward soldiers." True to this traditional policy, it appears that the earliest use made by Congress of the public lands was for military bounties. As early as August, 1776, it promised land bounties to deserters from the British Army, and a month later passed an act promising land to officers and soldiers of the Continental army and endeavored by this means to induce men to enlist. With the end of the war and the cession by the states of the whole of the conquered domain west of the Alleghenies to the National Government, the land policy of Congress seemed naturally to resolve itself into two alternatives. Namely: Shall the public lands be administered from the standpoint of settlement or from the standpoint of finance? A knowledge of the condition of the country at that time makes the answer obvious. The Revolutionary War had wrecked the finances of the states. Commerce had a faint life. Manufactures had not come into being. State contributions were often attended with technical difficulties. Loans accumulated while credit was small. Continental paper was of little or no value. Under such conditions as these it seems natural, if not almost inevitable, that Congress should view the public domain primarily as a source of revenue. That this is true may be judged by the very tone of the resolution urging cession by the states from

which the following is quoted. "They (the states) be urged that the war now being brought to a happy termination by the personal services of our soldiers, the supplies of property by our citizens and loans of money from them, as well as from foreigners, these several creditors have a right to expect that funds shall be provided on which they may rely for indemnification; that Congress shall consider vacant territory as an important resource." (35)

This, Hinsdale observes, was almost distinctly a new idea. "In colonial days waste land had not proved a source of income to either the colonies or the crown." (36) A small quit rent was reserved but scarcely ever paid. "Virginia imposed an annual rental of two cents per acre upon her waste lands and then threw them open to indiscriminate locations. Whole states, as West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, were disposed of without affording any public revenue whatever. It is therefore somewhat difficult to understand how the idea that the overmountain land would be a source of large income became current. But so it was." Without precedent, evidently, but under the necessity of relieving somehow the pressing financial burden incident to the Revolution, relief was sought from the public lands.

That this entire domain be sold or mortgaged to foreign states, received but scant consideration. That would be, said Peletiah Webster, "like killing the goose that laid the golden egg every day, in order to tear out at once all that was in her belly." (37) It was decided rather that first of all the ceded territory should be carefully marked off from the uncaded and intrusion on it should be rigidly prohibited. It was in pursuance of this policy that Congress twice in 1787 instructed the military to move against the unauthorized settlers. Under these instructions, a detachment of troops moved up and down the right bank of the Ohio River, driving out the settlers and burning their log cabins. (38)

Since the public lands then were looked upon by all the financiers of this period as an asset to be cashed at once for payment of the current expenses of government and for the extinguishment of the national debt, land legislation began to shape itself accordingly.(39)

The Ordinance of 1785 provided for the sale of land in large lots only, to first purchasers, to be resold by them to the settlers in lots more suitable to their convenience. Certainly a discouraging condition of sale and tenure when viewed from the standpoint of the settlers, who, if they availed themselves of the opportunity offered, were compelled to expose themselves to possible disaster through the ignorance or trickery of the capitalistic purchasers. (40)

About one-half of the state of Ohio was made up of large blocks of land, ranging from 1,000,000 to 4,209,800 acres in size. The desire being for immediate revenue, no credit was allowed for land purchases. "Payments could be made either in specie or in loan-office certificates reduced to specie value on their scale of depreciation, or by certificates of the liquidated debts of the United States, including interest. In case immediate payment was not forthcoming, the land was to be again offered for sale." (41) Attractive as this may have been to the speculator for whom the West had long been a favorite field of endeavor, (The Ohio Co. was formed in 1742) it ignored entirely the wishes of the men who were moving toward that region and had the greatest interest in the lands. What they desired was cheap lands in small tracts without delay, whereas the system in favor called for expensive surveys, taking much time for execution. No land offices existed in the West itself except the one at Pittsburg; the smallest tract obtainable was 640 acres at one dollar per acre, plus the cost of survey, and only half the townships were offered in this way. Furthermore, since rivers were the only highways of the interior, easy

access to them was of greatest importance. The surveys left this fact entirely out of consideration. The Seven Ranges extended forty-two miles inland at one point. It is scarcely to be wondered at, that the sale of land to actual settlers under the Ordinance of 1785 was insignificant. (42)

The next important change in the land system after 1785 was the law passed in 1796, the first land ordinance of the National Congress. (43) There is little in this law that is original, nor is there much evident weakening from the old financial policy. In fact, the price of land is increased to two dollars per acre, without the repeal of any of the restrictive measures of the original act in compensation. Even yet, as pointed out by Treat, section lines were not run, which made it difficult for the purchasers of a section to locate it, as well as for the government to compute the size of the fractional township and sections. In fact, they were but roughly computed and sold at the buyer's risk. That under such conditions the typical pioneer would or could pay \$1,280 for a section (the minimum amount at the minimum price) is too much to expect. The act of 1796 was "of importance mainly as a statement of principles, for little land was sold under it."

It was evident that if Congress insisted on selling land in large tracts it must either reduce the price or extend the credit, and if it wished to sell to the settlers it must reduce the price or the size of the minimum tract. So poor had been the sale in the period passed that the new act passed in 1800 showed some important developments in this direction. (44) They were principally the establishment of land offices, the extension of credit and the reduction of the size of the tracts. The land offices, located at Cincinnati, Chillicothe, Marietta and Steubenville, brought the place of sale within the reach of the would-be purchaser. (45) The credit system extending over a period of four years, (later extended to five) coupled with a reduction of the

minimum tracts offered to 320 acres, made it possible for settlers to have the use of that amount for five years for \$160, even tho they might not be able to hold it ultimately by paying the balance. This credit feature seemed quite alluring, and the land system under this act became a real factor in the westward movement. It regulated the sale of public land for twenty years, being modified only as to the computation of interest charges, by the introduction of quarter-section tracts in 1804, and a limited number of eighty-acre tracts in 1817.

Throughout the whole of its existence thus far, the public domain had been administered as a source of revenue primarily, the wishes of the settlers being of secondary importance. That this attitude, so strong at first, should have persisted, is not unnatural. National legislation was being dominated by eastern influence. Land values in the East were being endangered by the competition of the opening West. It was also feared that cheapened lands with the resultant flow of population from the seaboard states would cause a scarcity of labor and a rising wage scale in the industrial sections.

The credit policy of the Act of 1800, while passed doubtless for the special benefit of the settlers, was of doubtful value. Too often it induced them to expend their last cent in making the first payment, under the impression that by means of the produce of the lands they would be able to meet the balances as they came due. In this they were disappointed. This new land was not immediately highly productive. Many of the settlers consequently found themselves unable to meet their later installments. On September 30, 1819, more than \$21,000,000 was to be collected for these lands. More than \$500,000 had already been forfeited to the Government. Speculators, too, were taking advantage of the credit provisions to gain an option on the better land. A change was becoming necessary. (46)

A new act was drawn up and signed on April 24, 1820, "The most important piece of land legislation since the Congress of the Confederation laid down the principle of the American land system in 1785." (47) This act provided for the abolition of credit and the establishment of cash sales after July 1, 1820, for the sale of eighty-acre tracts, and for the reduction of the minimum price to \$1.25 per acre. By this act the speculators found their dreams of fattening on the unearned increment of a growing country curtailed, while the settler for \$100 could now purchase a farm outright, which under the old system would have furnished little more than the first payment on a quarter-section tract.

While the old revenue attitude toward the public domain continued in the older sections, that its force was steadily weakening is evidenced by this law of 1820, the beginning really of a new era in the history of our land policy. The question of the welfare of the settlers had risen much in relative importance, and from this time on may be safely said to have had equal, if not first, consideration.

This change of attitude is revealed again by a series of relief acts, beginning March 2, 1821. As has been already suggested, many pioneers, underestimating the difficulty of realizing a quick return from the products of their western farms, were finding themselves unable to pay the final installments of their purchase. If arrears were not paid, the law had to take its course, and the land reverted to the government. "To eject unfortunate settlers from their lands and log cabins must have seemed to the pioneers an inhuman thing." (48) The law, however, had to be executed until relief came. Beginning with March 2, 1821, eleven different acts were passed in as many years to ease the terms of credit to the bankrupt western farmers. A discrimination in some respects against the faithful purchasers, and a concession to the speculators, these acts

nevertheless prevented almost half the land perhaps settled under the act of 1800 from reverting back to the government, rendering its occupants landless and homeless.

There is finally a changing attitude on the question of pre-emption to take care of the long and insistent demand of the squatters. The squatting evil, for such it was in the eyes of those who held a revenue policy at least, represents one of the oldest things in American life, going back to the very first years of colonial history. Squatting on waste land was a right and the squatter's point of view was that laws interfering with this right were unjust and of no effect. It is a well known fact that the tide of immigration always preceded the surveys and land sales authorized by the Government, and the cry for pre-emption was the cry of those hardy pioneers to have more of the benefits of their enterprise secured to them. The attitude of stern repression at first adopted toward them has been already mentioned. Here again the public mind was undergoing evolution. (49)

Pre-emption, quoting from the "Public Domain", "is a premium in favor of and condition for making a permanent settlement and a home. It is a preference for actual tilling and residing upon a piece of land." It was not a free grant of land but the giving to a settler of the privilege of purchasing land as against competition. "It amounts simply to the exclusion of competition and the purchase of land at a minimum or double minimum, as the case may require." The first general pre-emption act was passed May 29, 1830. By this act every settler or occupant of the public lands after giving due proof of settlement or improvement was allowed to enter in the register of the land office any number of acres up to a quarter section at the established minimum price of \$1.25 per acre. This act, however, was but a temporary measure. The first general and permanent pre-emption act was not passed until 1841. This act marked the last

great step in the evolution of legislation from the purely revenue attitude to the idea of free grants of land to actual settlers, which was realized with the Homestead Law of 1862. (50)

The change witnessed thus far had been very gradual, the result of experience as well as of changed conditions. The suffering of land purchasers under the credit system, the failure to realize any considerable revenue from the cash sale, the increasing prosperity of the country from commerce and manufacture, all these causes combined to mould public opinion and shape the ultimate policy of homesteads for the actual settlers. The extent to which the flow of population toward the West was checked by this unfavorable early legislation cannot, of course, be accurately determined. (51) That it had a deterrent influence certainly could not be denied. A comparison of the 1820 population of nine western states settled under the acts that have been mentioned with the population of two which escaped those restrictions should prove enlightening.

Under national regulation:

Ohio	581,295
Indiana	148,178
Illinois	55,162
Michigan	8,764
Mississippi	75,448
Alabama	127,901
Louisiana	152,923
Missouri	66,557
Arkansas	<u>14,255</u>

Total 1,229,484

States independent of national regulation:

Kentucky	422,771
Tennessee	<u>564,135</u>

Total 986,906

Relative to this situation, Treat says that altho settlers were moving into the public domain north and south of the Ohio River and west of the

Mississippi, that it must be remembered that only a portion of these people were holding lands purchased at the land offices, and that of the settlers west of the Appalachians in 1820 fully one-half had taken up lands in regions that had never come under the land system - notably Kentucky and Tennessee. And of the settlers in the public land states and territories, the greater part were located on land which had not been surveyed and sold under the general land system. (52)

Another set of figures from which it is possible to make some deductions is the record of receipts from land sales during a large part of this period. (53)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1801	\$168,125	1822	\$1,803,581
1802	188,628	1823	916,523
1803	165,675	1824	984,418
1804	487,526	1825	1,216,090
1805	540,192	1826	1,393,785
1806	765,245	1827	1,497,053
1807	466,163	1828	1,018,308
1808	647,939	1829	1,517,175
1809	442,252	1830	2,329,356
1810	696,548	1831	3,210,815
1811	1,040,237	1832	2,623,381
1812	710,427	1833	3,967,681
1813	835,655	1834	4,857,600
1814	1,135,971	1835	14,757,600
1815	1,287,959	1836	24,641,979
1816	1,717,985	1837	6,770,036
1817	1,991,226	1838	3,081,939
1818	2,606,564	1839	7,076,447
1819	3,274,442	1840	3,292,220
1820	1,635,871	1841	1,363,090
1821	1,212,966		

Signal as the victory of 1841 may have seemed, it soon became evident that it was not by any means complete. The evil of speculation, so prevalent under former systems, while somewhat mitigated, was not by any means destroyed. Through his superior financial resources and ability to employ shrewd men to locate the choicest lands, the speculator still had an advantage over the

settler that could scarcely be overcome. (54) "His agents were instructed to select those tracts most likely to advance most rapidly in value, due to advantageous situation, excellence of soils, minerals, water power, or with reference to settlements already made; and as a result when the land sales opened, he knew exactly what tracts were unoccupied and of greatest value."

The St. Anthony (Minn.) Express said in 1852: We have a set of speculators, land sharks, Shylocks, in this Territory who have bought all the land in close proximity to the villages and refuse to sell it except at a considerable advance on government price. As a result of the general acquisition throughout the West of large tracts of land by non-residents, settlers who wanted cheap land had to go farther still into the wilderness, away from society and market where their lot, normally a hard one, became increasingly burdensome.

One of the contributing causes to this speculation was the general practice on the part of the Federal Government of issuing land grants as bounties to soldiers. Since many of these could not or would not locate in the West, these warrants were sold, ordinarily to land speculators, and became an article of commerce, bought and sold on the market just as railway stocks are today, and in anticipation of the opening of a new land office were "salted down" in large quantities by this same class of men.(55) The scope of their activities may be judged from the following extract from the St. Anthony Express:

"Nearly 200,000 land warrants yet remain to be located. If assignable, not more than one-third of one-fourth of these will be located by the original holders. Land sharks will swallow all the rest and disgorge them, polluted by their blighting touch, upon the fairest portions of our Territory. Instead of boats swarming with an energetic, hardy and industrious crowd of farmers and mechanics, they will be encumbered by the agents of eastern millionaires, their pockets stuffed with warrants, who like the flies that come upon the borders

of Egypt will cause the land to stink."

Greeley, writing from Wisconsin Territory in 1849, emphasizes the same condition. Wherever, he says, upon a natural harbor, a bay, a head of navigation, or a waterfall, a village began or promised to spring up, the speculator or his agent pounced upon all the unoccupied lands within a circuit of a mile or two. "This he would hold for a price, treble or sixty-fold what he had paid for it." (56)

There is no reason to suppose that the conditions described were peculiar to Wisconsin or Minnesota. Against the aggressions of eastern capital, the home makers were fighting a discouraging, often a losing, battle, for often the necessary amount had been expended by them in building cabins and in stocking farms, most of them were penniless. And if the claim happened to be located in a section that had been proclaimed for sale, it was likely to be purchased after a year by anyone who chose to buy it, unless protected by public opinion or a claim association. Such conditions as these, it is obvious, would not be tolerated willingly and so an insistent demand began to arise for a law that would reserve the public domain for actual settlers. (57)

On January 3, 1845, a petition was presented to Congress, asking that it pass "with all convenient haste, a law by which every citizen who may be desirous of cultivating the earth for a living shall be enabled to enter upon the public lands and occupy a reasonable sized farm thereon, free of cost." During the first session of the Twenty-ninth Congress three men introduced independent homestead bills, authorizing every poor man in the United States who is at the head of a family to enter 160 acres of public domain without money and without price.

The history of the appearance and reappearance of homestead bills in Congress, of how the land question became merged into the greater problem

of slave soil or free, and how it was finally passed largely as a sectional anti-slavery issue - all this would be perhaps somewhat irrelevant to our discussion. Suffice it to say that the pre-emption law of 1841 with its attendant evils, already briefly described, governed the method of land disposal in the West for more than two decades and that in this time no relief was given from the activities of land sharks and speculators. On the other hand, when it became known that in every congress from 1847 until the close of the Civil War general bounty bills were presented and that four of them became laws, it appears that through part of this period at least, the field for this evil machination was being extended.

Chapter IV

Reflected by and from the legislative activities that have been considered, and playing always, if somewhat intangible, yet, an important part in this whole problem was the degree to which the rank and file became alive to the possibilities offered by the West as a solution for their social and industrial ills. To us from the vantage ground of a later period, this connection seems so evident that one would be led to assume that its significance had always been a matter of general recognition. This is not strictly correct, however, for altho it was doubtless patent to some, yet it is evident that if realized at all by the great mass of people, throughout a very considerable part of our early history, it was in a very vague and passive fashion. Until this idea became an active motivating one, it is evident also that the evolution of transportation or legislation or the removal of any other barrier to the westward flow of population must have remained quite useless. The awakening of this active interest and its spread in scope and intensity presents itself as a part of the general field for investigation in our general problem.

Two forces are at once observed at work here, each almost equally active. The one, the social reformer of the East who upholds and propogates the idea of cheap lands made available to actual settlers, for its effect on social conditions among the working classes. The other, western men who would induce a flow of industrial population from the East to hasten the growth of that section of the country.

There is evidence that already in the late twenties social reformers were beginning to contend for free access to the public lands in order to ameliorate the condition of the working man. The sale of lands, they began to see, was injurious to the laboring classes because few of them possessed sufficient capital to buy it. If, in place of selling the land, it were to be given free

to actual settlers, it would, they contended, bring a freehold and independence within reach of all. As early as 1828, the Mechanics Free Press contained a memorial to Congress proposing that Public land should no longer be sold but suggested to Congress "the propriety of placing all public lands without the delay of sales within the reach of the people at large by title of company only . . . and therefore pray your honorable body to enact a law authorizing a grant to any individual who shall apply for it, of a free use of so much of the public land as you in your wisdom shall deem sufficient."

Two years before this time, Thos. H. Benton expressed the attitude of the West toward the repressive revenue attitude of the East (in Congress) when he said, "I speak to statesmen and not to compting clerks; to senators and not to quaestors of provinces; to an assembly of legislators and not to a keeper of the King's forests. I speak to senators who know this to be a Republic, not a Monarchy; who know that the public lands belong to the people and not to the Federal Government." (58)

John R. Commons, in his discussion of this question, suggests that it was during the time of hardship to labor as a result of the rapidly rising prices just prior to the panic of 1837 that the importance of the public lands dawned upon the workingmen, and it began to be evident to them that one reason why their wages did not rise and their strikes were ineffective was because they were cut off from escape to the land by existing conditions. Speaking of the importance of this growing sentiment, he further says, (59) "In their conventions and papers, therefore, they (the workingmen) demanded that the lands should no more be treated as a source of public revenue to relieve taxpayers, but should be treated as an instrument of social reform to raise the wages of labor." And when we in later years refer to our wide domain and our great natural resources as reasons for higher wages in this country, it is well to remember that access to

these resources was secured only by agitation and act of legislature. Not merely as a gift of nature, but mainly as a demand of democracy have the nation's resources contributed to the elevation of labor. And it was in the events of 1827 to 1837 with their futile immediate results that the lesson was learned which in a later day led the nation's industrial democracy even to civil war in order to establish the freedom of the public lands.

Responsible doubtless in a large measure for the beginning of this heightened interest in the public lands among the working people and helping to mark therefore the beginning of the general agitation, was the appearance of the Workingman's Advocate in 1825, published by George and Henry Evans. This magazine, published in New York City during the five year period from 1825 - 1830, may perhaps be said to be the first appearance of a representative of the labor press in the United States. It was succeeded by "The Daily Sentinel" and finally by "Young America." The demands of the representatives of labor printed in Young America, altho extremely radical, were endorsed by some six hundred papers and have since in some instances been granted. An enumeration of some of them will show how thoroughly its readers were being impressed with the relation that exists between land and conditions of labor. (60)

First of all was: The right of man to the soil, "Vote yourself a farm." Another was, "Freedom of public lands." Another, "Homesteads made inalienable." Still another was, "Land limitation to 160 acres." Four out of twelve demands dealt with the land situation.

To deal in a comprehensive fashion with the spread of this agitation until its climax is reached and its goal attained in the Homestead Act of 1862 is beyond the scope of this endeavor. What follows is rather random bits of information that tend to mark here and there its progress.

At the convention of the "National Trades Union," held in 1834,

with delegates from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, the following resolutions were offered: (61) "Resolved, that this convention deprecate the system now practiced in the disposal of the public lands because of its violation of the inherent rights of the citizen, seeing that the whole of the unscated lands belong unto the people, and should not be disposed of to the prejudice of any class of society. Each and every citizen having a just claim to an equitable portion thereof, a location upon which being the only just title thereunto."

"Resolved, that this convention would the more especially reprobate the sale of the public lands because of its injurious tendency, as it affects the interests and independence of the laboring classes, inasmuch as it debars them from occupation of any portion of the same unless provided with an amount of capital which the greater portion of them who would avail themselves of this aid to arrive at personal independence cannot hope to attain, owing to the many incroachments made upon them through the reduction in wages of labor consequent upon its surplus quantity in the market, which surplus would be drained off and a demand for the produce of mechanical labor increased if these public lands were left to actual settlers."

It has been suggested that throughout this whole period one of the principal agencies for fostering and disseminating the idea that free access to the public lands furnished a remedy for the ills of which labor was complaining, was the various publications of the Evans Brothers. The following, quoted from the *Workingman's Advocate* for July 6, 1844, will show the tenor of their writing:

"Let an outlet be formed that will carry off our super-abundant labor to the salubrious West. In these regions thousands and tens of thousands who are now languishing in hopeless poverty will find a certain and speedy inde-

pendence. The labor market will thus be freed of its present distressing competition; and those who remain, as well as those who leave, will have the opportunity of realizing a comfortable living."

It was in the latter part of 1845 that Horace Greeley, Editor of the New York Tribune, began to notice the homestead movement, and in a discussion of the National Reformers gives qualified approval to their scheme of a homestead law. Five months later, he comes forth with a whole-hearted vindication of the movement in the following editorial.

(62) "The freedom of the Public Lands to actual settlers and the limitation of future acquisition of land to some reasonable amount are measures which seem to us vitally necessary to the ultimate emancipation of labor from thralldom and misery. What is mainly wanted is that each man shall have a chance to earn, and than an assurance of the just fruits of his labors. We must achieve these results yet; we can do it. Every new labor-saving invention is a new argument, an added necessity for it. And so long as the laboring class must live by working for others, while others are striving to live luxuriously and amass wealth out of the fruits of such labor, so long the abuses and sufferings now complained of must continue to exist or frequently reappear. We must go to the root of the evil."

The influence of Greeley in promoting the cause of free land can hardly be estimated. Many readers of the Weekly Tribune looked upon it as a kind of political bible. "In the homes of the wage-earners of the East and the settlers' cabins of the West it was prized and cherished." (63) A western editor, writing in 1853, said, "The influence of The Tribune upon public opinion is greater than its conductors claim for it. Its Isms with scarcely an exception, though the people may reject them at first, yet ripen into strength insensibly. A few years since, the Tribune commenced the advocacy of the principle of Free

Land for the Landless. The first bill presented upon that subject by Mr. Greeley was hooted out of that body. But who doubts what the result would be if the people of the whole nation had the right to vote upon the question today?"

Effective in the manner of its appeal was "Vote yourself a farm," an article that appeared in The Workingman for January 24, 1846, and as a circular or handbill was distributed in hundreds of thousands. To quote some of its striking passages: "Are you an American citizen? Then you are joint owner of the public lands. Why not take enough of your property to provide yourself a home? Why not vote yourself a farm?" (64)

"Remember Poor Richard's saying: 'Now I have a sheep and a cow, everyone bids me good morrow.' . . . The bare rights to a farm, tho you should never go near it, will save you from insult. Therefore, vote yourself a farm."

"Are you a party follower? Then you have long enough employed your vote to the benefit of scheming office seekers; use it for once to benefit yourself. Vote yourself a farm."

"Are you tired of slavery - of drudging for others - of poverty and its attendant miseries? Then, vote yourself a farm."

"Are you endowed with reason? Then you must know that your right to live hereby includes the right to a place to live in - the right to a home. Assert this right so long denied mankind by feudal robbers and their attorneys. Vote yourself a farm."

"Are you a believer in the scriptures? Then assert that the land is the Lord's because he made it. Resist then the blasphemers who exact money for his work. . . . Vote yourself a farm."

"Are you a man? Then assert the sacred rights of man - especially your right to stand upon God's earth and till it for your own profit. Vote yourself a farm."

"Would you free your country and the sons of toil everywhere from the heartless, irresponsible mastery of the aristocracy of avarice?
Vote yourself a farm."

The first clause of a proposed bill for Congress appeared in Young America in September, 1848, and reads as follows: An act to establish the equal rights to the use of the land and its natural products; to afford a refuge to the landless population of the United States; to secure homesteads to individual families and associations; to provide for the increase in population; to make labor the master instead of the slave of capital, and to perpetuate the republic.

(65) The Industrial Congress, held in Boston in 1846, marks the beginning of a series of such meetings; New York in 1847; Philadelphia in 1848; Cincinnati in 1849; Chicago in 1850; Albany in 1851; Washington in 1852; Wilmington in 1853; Trenton in 1854; Cleveland in 1855, and New York in 1856. At each of these the land question proved to be the leading subject for discussion.

(66) Another factor in the turning of attention toward the public land situation and that helped to influence public sentiment was the infusion, during the latter part of this period, of a great number of German and Scandinavian immigrants into our population. Anti-capitalistic by instinct almost and with a deep interest in the land, they began to combat existing methods of land disposal. The Volks Tribune and the Social Republic played no small part in this general movement.

With all this agitation by social reformers in the East supplementing the efforts of the land reformers in the West, it is small wonder that the question of the possible significance of the western land in our social and economic life was raised from obscurity to universal recognition and concern. "The Providence 'American' called it the most important subject to be acted on by Congress. The Richmond 'Enquirer' declared that 'these public lands are

beginning to present some of the most serious questions which have ever agitated our public councils.' The Philadelphia Gazette affirmed that the disposition of the public lands was the most dangerous subject of legislation before Congress. In the New York 'Evening Post' the situation was described as follows: 'But the public lands - the public lands - this is the exciting theme which brings every man to his seat, and every other question - tariff, roads, revenue, education, - all insensibly slid into this.'" (67)

After reviewing in this way a history of the evolution of those factors that would make for the promotion of retardation of the settlement of the public lands, and after noting also the coincidence that existed in the time of establishing a favorable condition of communication, of legislation, and of public interest, those things which most vitally affected the movement, it might be profitable to observe what change, if any, in distribution of population actually occurred. The following figures are compiled from the census reports for the years indicated and show the population of fourteen states of the eastern group as it varies during the period and also fourteen states falling within the public domain. Of particular interest and significance is the change to be observed in the rates of growth of population that occurs between East and West in the decade of the thirties.

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
<u>The West</u>							
Ohio	45	230	581	937	1519	1950	2339
Indiana	5	24	147	343	685	988	1350
Illinois		12	55	157	476	851	1711
Missouri		20	66	140	383	682	1182
Kentucky	220	406	564	687	779	982	1155
Tennessee	105	261	422	681	829	1002	1109
Alabama			127	309	590	771	964
Mississippi	8	40	75	136	375	606	791
Wisconsin					30	305	775
Michigan		4	8	31	212	397	749
Louisiana		96	153	215	352	517	708
Texas						212	604
Arkansas				30	97	209	435
Minnesota						6	172

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
<u>The East</u>							
New York	589	959	1372	1918	2428	3097	3880
Pennsylvania ...	602	810	1049	1348	1724	2311	2906
Virginia	880	974	1065	1211	1239	1421	1596
Massachusetts ..	422	472	523	610	737	994	1231
Georgia	162	252	340	516	691	906	1057
North Carolina .	478	555	638	737	753	869	992
South Carolina .	345	415	502	581	594	668	703
Maryland	341	380	407	447	470	583	687
New Jersey	211	245	277	320	373	489	672
Connecticut	251	261	275	297	309	370	460
New Hampshire ..	182	214	244	269	284	317	326
Vermont	154	235	235	280	291	314	315
Rhode Island ...	69	76	83	97	108	147	174
Delaware	64	72	72	76	78	91	112

Population by states for the years indicated. (000 omitted)

Table showing the comparative growth in population of the East and West from 1800 to 1860.

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
East	4650	5910	7082	8707	10079	12577	15111
West	393	1093	2190	3666	6347	9578	14044

(000 omitted)

Table showing the comparative gains in population of the East and West from 1800 to 1860

	1800-10	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60
East	1260	1172	1625	1372	2498	2534
West	867	1079	1476	2681	3231	4466

(000 omitted)

Chapter V

What then has been the relation between the public lands and the labor problem in the thirty year period from 1830 to 1860? Were conditions such as to vindicate the popular idea that where abundant public land exists oppressive laboring conditions and wide-spread poverty are obviated? A study of the economic and social conditions that characterized the industrial sections of the country in 1830, as pointed out before, revealed a condition of general distress that was scarcely surpassed during the depression of 1907-8, when public land had practically ceased to be available.

In an attempt to vindicate the popular conception of this relationship, it is scarcely sufficient to show that the normal effect of the land was counteracted by those conditions of transportation, legislation and general apathy that rendered them unaccessible to the masses. Since it has been shown that these conditions did not always obtain, one should be able to show conditions bettering in proportion to the extent to which these hindrances were removed. This, we believe, can in a measure be done.

It is significant, first of all, that there was a turning from those practical demands which were characteristic of the decade and a half following 1825 and which had to do mostly with decent relief from the general suffering, to indulge in the "hot air" of the forties, that period of "unbounded loquacity," which found expression in transcendentalism, abolition, and such idealistic ventures as the Brook Farm experiment. (68)

In addition to this type of thinking which does not reflect the grim poverty of the earlier period, there seems also a lack of that dissatisfaction and unrest that characterized the labor history of the early part of the century. At no time, certainly during the latter part of this period, even during the depression of 1857, would that well-known observation of 1835 that

"strikes were all the fashion" apply.

More convincing still perhaps would be a study of the movement of wages and prices throughout the period. The progress in money wages is indicated by the following table. (69)

Comparison of wages by periods: 1830 and 1860

	Av. daily wage for period ending 1830	Av. daily wage for period ending 1860	Percentage of increase or decrease
Agricultural laborers ...	\$0.83	\$1.01	25.8 %
Blacksmiths	1.12	1.69	50.9
Carpenters	1.07	2.03	87.7
Clock makers	1.29	1.96	51.9
Clothing makers	1.27	1.43	12.6
Cotton mill operatives ..	.886	1.03	16.3
Glass makers	1.13	2.96	161.9
Harness makers	1.13	1.65	46
Laborers .....	.796	.975	22
Masons	1.22	1.53	25.4
Metal workers	1.23	1.35	9.8
Millwright.....	1.21	1.66	37.2
Painters	1.25	1.85	48
Paper mill operatives ...	.666	1.17	75.7
Printers	1.25	1.75	40
Ship & boat builders	1.40	3.65	160
Shoemakers	1.06	1.70	60
Tanners and curriers	1.13	1.67	47.8
Wooden goods workers	1.25	1.72	37.6
Woolen mill operatives ..	.946	.873	- 7.7

It is not, however, the rate of money wages that most nearly concerns the workman, but rather the real wage. If this increase in money wages has been more than counterbalanced by an increase in prices, the workman's real wage has, of course, declined. In an effort to show the variation of the real wage, a table of prices paid for the leading articles of household consumption during the same period is shown also.

Comparison of prices by periods: 1830 and 1860 (69)

Article	Basis	Av. price for period ending 1830	Av. price for period ending 1860	Percentage of increase or decrease
Apples	bu.	\$.439	\$.995	126.7 %
Beans	qt.	.085	.088	3.5
Corn	bu.	.817	.992	21.4
Potatoes	bu.	.369	.86	133.1
Boots	pr.	4.75	2.21	-53.5
Shoes	pr.	1.26	1.09	-13.5
Slippers	pr.	.935	.945	1.1
Butter	lb.	.186	.262	40.9
Cheese	lb.	.089	.117	31.5
Eggs	doz.	.15	.22	46.7
Milk	qt.	.044	.052	18.2
Cotton cloth	yd.	.21	.118	-43.8
Flannel	yd.	.57	.405	-28.9
Linen	yd.	.453	.531	17.2
Flour	bbl.	7.08	8.92	26
Indian meal	lb.	.016	.021	31.3
Coffee	lb.	.206	.163	-20.9
Salt	qt.	.063	.029	-54
Sugar	lb.	.16	.12	-25
Tea	lb.	.825	.529	-35.9
Beef	lb.	.076	.126	65.8
Cork	lb.	.088	.114	29.5

From the foregoing comparison it appears that prices have increased to a certain extent, but not uniformly. Certain staple articles, chiefly those produced under the factory system of labor, as boots and shoes and cotton and woolen cloth, dry goods and dress goods, show a constant decline. A few of the staple groceries also have declined, while flour, fish and meal have risen.

Consolidating and averaging the wages shown in the former table, it appears that for those occupations compared the general average increase in wages for the decade ending 1860, as compared with that ending in 1830, is 52.3 percent. Comparing the price changes of the same period by a consolidation of the percentages which show either an advance or a decline in price for the articles represented in the comparison, the general average percentage of increase is found to be 9.6 percent. If averages are considered rather than

percentages, the average increase is found to be 15.7. The mean of these two, 12.7 percent, represents perhaps as nearly as possible the increase in prices for the decade ending in 1860 with that ending in 1830. Without budgets showing the expenses of workingmen, the percentage of increase in the cost of living cannot, of course, be accurately determined. However, a comparison of the two advances, that of wages and that of prices, indicates material gain on the part of the former and express more clearly than words the change that took place in the period from 1830-60 in the pecuniary status of the workingman.

It should be remembered too that this was not the progress simply of a static population. The population of the United States had increased from 12,866,020 in 1830 to 31,443,321 in 1860, a greater percentage of growth than during any other thirty year period in our national history. To have maintained our standard of living in the face of such a rapid increase, a large percentage of which represents an immigrant population, would have been an achievement, had the public lands not furnished a field for expansion. To have raised that standard without this help seems almost impossible. They played a double part. Not only did they furnish field for expansion, lessening thus the possibility of redundancy of labor and low wages, their large production by keeping down the cost of living helped to boost the real wage.

If it were possible in this investigation to go a step farther and compare conditions in America as they existed during this period with those of a country similar in all respects with the exception of the existence of public lands, the relationship might be judged more accurately. Altho such ideal conditions for study do not exist, yet some comparisons with other nations less advantageously situated in this respect may not be without merit. The following table presenting a comparison of wages in the United States, England and France in 1825, shows that even then with immigration into the public lands scarcely

begun, that the condition of the American laborers was more favorable than that of their European brethren.

Comparative Wages in England, France and U. S., 1828 (70)

Employments	Basis	England	France	U. S.
Common laborer	day	\$0.74	\$0.37 -.40	\$1.00
Carpenter	day	.97	.55 -.75	1.45
Mason	day	1.10	.60-.80	1.62
Farm laborer (with board)	mo.	6.50	4.00-6.00	8.00 - 10.00
Domestic (female with board) ..	wk.	.67	.... ....	1.00 - 1.50
Machinists & forgers (best) ...	day	1.94	.... ....	1.50 - 1.75
Machinists & forgers (ordinary)	day	1.10	.92	1.25 - 1.42
Mule spinners (cotton)	day	1.02	.80 -.90	1.08 - 1.40
Spinners (woolen)	dday	.94	.40 -.50	1.08
Weavers (on hand looms)	day	.74	.37 -.50	.90
Boys (age 10 - 12)	wk.	1.30	.85-1.00	1.50
Females (in cotton mills)	wk.	1.96	1.48-2.00	2.00 - 3.00
Females (in woolen mills)	wk.	1.96	1.50	2.50

Complete statistical data for this period seems to be lacking and so some dependence must be placed in other forms of evidence. The following is a contemporary description of conditions in England as they prevailed before the Factory Act of 1832.

"The facts we collected seemed to me to be terrible, almost beyond belief, Not in exceptional cases, but as a rule, children of ten years old worked regularly fourteen hours a day with but a half-hour interval for the mid-day meal, which was eaten in the factory. In the fine-yarn cotton mills they were subjected to this labor in a temperature usually exceeding 75 degrees.

. . . . In some cases we found that greed of gain had impelled the mill owners to still greater extremes of inhumanity, utterly disgraceful indeed to a civilized nation. Their mills were run fifteen, and in exceptional cases sixteen, hours a day with a single set of hands, and they did not scruple to employ children of both sexes from the age of eight. . . . Most of the overseers openly carried stout leather thongs, and we frequently saw even the youngest children severely beaten. . . . In some of the factories from one-fourth

to one-fifth of the children were cripples or otherwise deformed or permanently injured by excessive toil, sometimes by brutal abuse." (71)

The Niles Register for April 21, 1832, commenting on the condition of the working class, says: "We have several times alluded to the amount of wages paid in England and severely rebuked a disposition maintained by some to reduce the working people of the United States to the same horrible conditions."

(72) Extracts from the Manchester advertiser afforded some idea of the price of labor in the neighborhood of Manchester. A man with his wife and two children in that district was earning 9 s, 10½ d per week; another man with a family of nine workers was cited who collectively earned 20 s per week. While it is pointed out that wages may not have been quite so low in the woolen manufacturing districts, the supposition, it affirms, is that there was little difference in the laborers' circumstances. (73) Webb says that in 1831 the boys in the Northumberland mines who were paid by the day were kept at work from fourteen to seventeen hours a day. The hewers, however, paid by the ton had restricted theirs to ten or twelve hours each. By 1837 the ten hour day was becoming generally established. Over time, however, was common, and half holidays on Saturday was unknown.

So far as the money wage is concerned, conditions on the Continent seem to have been even worse. "In Saxony a man employed at his own loom working diligently from Monday morning until Saturday night, from five o'clock in the morning until dusk and even at times with a lamp, his wife assisting him in finishing and taking the work, could not possibly earn more than about sixty cents per week, nor could one who had three children aged twelve and upwards, all working at the loom as well as himself, and his wife employed in doing up the work, earn more than \$1.00 weekly. (74)

A wider view of the general wage level of foreign countries in

1843 may be gotten from the following statistics on the wages of common laborers.

France	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	d per day	
Germany	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	- 8	" "
North Italy	3	- 4	" "
Italy	9	- 10	" "
England	9	- 15	" "
Scotland	8		" "
Ireland	4	- 6	" "
Russia	3	- 5	" "
Spain	3	- 6	" "
Portugal	2	- 5	" "
Norway	3	- 5	" "
Sweden	2	- 5	" " (75)

Engel in his description of the working class in England in 1844 depicts a depth of misery that is widespread and certainly beyond anything that America ever experienced. Bowley in a more scientific treatment of wages in the United Kingdom says, "The study of the period from 1830 to 1860 has been much neglected. In its wages, the cotton industry increased about two shillings on ten, although there was a falling off until 1845-6. Building and town artisans did not improve their earnings by so large a percentage. The wages of seamen increased over ten percent between 1840 and 1860, but the percent of increase between 1830 and 1840 cannot be accurately measured except for one part, when it appears to have been stationary. Compositors' wages in small towns increased rapidly but in large towns were stationary, and the average increase was ten percent; those of agricultural laborers increased from 10 s to 11s 7 d, and miners' diminished." (76)

Fragmentary as are the data available, it seems safe to conclude that neither in money nor in real wages did England or any continental country keep pace with the upward movement of the wage level that characterized the whole of the period in America, and never at any time during the period was the condition of the laboring classes in America so miserable as at various times and places in Europe. The claim that the public lands are responsible for the

whole of the variation in favor of the country where they existed, could not perhaps be easily substantiated. That they played some part, however, certainly no one will attempt to deny.

In conclusion then it seems that one might safely say that the assertions as to the relation which exists between abundant land and the welfare of laboring classes, quoted in the beginning of the thesis, are on the whole true. In the period from 1830 to 1860 the public lands certainly exerted an uplifting influence on laboring conditions in America, functioning not however as a safety valve in that the moment depression was felt or industrial conditions became oppressive, escape was made to the "wilderness," the impression which writers, as has been observed, often tend to convey. The coordination of those physical, political and psychic conditions which would be necessary for such deft manipulation of population, seems scarcely probable under any circumstance. That it did not exist in the United States was evidenced in the fact that poverty and unemployment became serious problems at intervals during the period from 1830 to 1860, and by the further fact that population movement failed to synchronize in any definite fashion with these periods of depression. It was not the immediate or periodic effect but rather the long time effect of the public lands that deserve most recognition. Absorbing, as they did in a more or less regular and gradual manner, the redundant population of the industrial sections, they created a general condition of supply of labor that gave the wage level an upward tendency and without doubt was in a large measure responsible for the fact that the scale of wages which then prevailed was the highest in the world.

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